

Message Text

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ACTION AID-31

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 PC-01 USIA-06 IO-10 INR-07 DODE-00

AGR-05 INT-05 COME-00 /072 W
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R 290912Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7195
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 705

AFDROUGHT

EO 11652: GDS
SUBJ: PORT SITUATION COTONOU

REF COTONOU 627

1. WFP REP EYBEN JUST RETURNED FROM NIGER WHERE HE DISCUSSED COTONOU PORT SITUATION WITH ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF ALI SEIBOU, (WHOM EYBEN CHARACTZRIZED AS 2ND OR 3RD MOST POWERFUL MAN IN NIGHER HIERARCHY) AMONG OTHERS. EYBEN TOLD AIDOFF THAT SEIBOU WAS DISGUSTED BY DAHOMEAN HANDLING OF NIGER'S TRANSPORT NEEDS. SEIBOU ASKED EYBEN TO MAKE REPRESENTATION ON NIGER'S ESSENTIAL FOOD PRIORITIES TO OCDN AND TO REPORT BACK TO HOM IN HOW THEY ARE BEING OBSERVED. SEIBOU SAID HE WOULD SEND 60-70 NIGER TRUCKS TO COTONOU TO HELP WITH PORT EVACUATION, IF DOREGO COULX NOT MEET HIS PROMISE TO SHIP NIGER 300-400 MT OF ESSENTIAL FOOD-STUFFS PER DAY.

2. COMMENT: ESSENTIAL FOODSTUFFS HAVE BEEN EVACUATED FROM COTONOU PORT AT A NOTICEABLY HIGHER RATE--ABOUT 265 MT PER DAY SINCE THE END OF LAST WEEK. ON MAY 27 AN UNPRECEDENTED EIGHT TRUCKS LOADED FOOD-GRAINS ATHIOTONOU PORT. THERE ARE SIGNS THAT DOREGO MAY BE TAKING HIS LATEST COMMITMENTS MORE SERIOUSLY THAN PREVIOUS ONES. REDUCED PRESSURE ON THE TRANSPORT SYSTEM

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FROM COTTON AND INCREASED PRESSURE ON THE BUREAUCRACY FROM

NIGER POLITICAL INITIATIVES MAY BE RESPONSIBLE. IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT, ACCORDING TO SEIBOU, NIGER WILL SEND TRUCKS ONLY IF OCDN PERFORMANCE DOES NOT IMPROVE. EVACUATION RATE WOULD GREATLY BE SPEEDED UP IF THE TRUCKS COULD BE SENT IN ANY CASE. EVEN AT 300 MT PER DAY--PROBABLY THE PRACTICAL MAXIMUM OVER A TWO-MONTH PERIOD--OCDN WOULD NOT EVACUATE THE 20,000 MT ESSENTIAL FOODSTUFFS PRESENTLY IN THE PORT MUCH BEFORE AUG 1. TRUCKS FROM NIGERMEN THE QUANTITIES MENTIONED COULD BE COUNTED ON FOR ABOUT 200MT PER DAY. SO FAR, ALL THIS REFERS ONLY TO NIGER FOODSTUFFS. NOBODY IS TALKING ABOUT A PRIORITY FOR MALI WHICH SEEMS TO BE THE ONLY WAY OF GETTING FOODSTUFFS FROM COTONOU TO GAO BEFORE AUG. THE 900 MT MIL POWDER AND 400 MT HIGHEST PRIORITY PESTICIDES EXPECTED COTONOU DURING THE NEXT MONTH FOR NIGER WILL NOT HELP THIS SITUATION. NOTE: EYBEN PLACES HIGHEST PRIORITY ON PESTICIDES BECAUSE OF POTENTIAL LOCUST PLAGUE WHICH COULD RESULT FROM MOISTURE CONTENT REACHING LEVELS SUFFICIENT TO HATCH LARVAE WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCUMULATING SINCE BEGINNING OF DROUGHT.

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